

each occasion of use. And no doubt the process of feedback from use to agreed meaning goes on all the time (this is how the phenomenon of semantic change must be considered). But the point here is that, even if the model currently favoured by Langendoen and the transformationalists can be made adequate to explicate all word meanings, it will still take the acquisition and the experimental base of this semantic competence for granted, and this is just what Malinowski and Firth were trying to come to grips with, stimulated in Malinowski's case by difficulties encountered in translation and interpretation when operating between languages spoken across wide cultural divergences.

Context of situation was an attempt to suggest what lies behind our knowledge of word meanings, taken by Langendoen as a starting-point, even though it may so far have proved in practice impossible to state more than a small part of word meanings in such terms. Langendoen chides Firth and those following up his ideas with making context of situation 'a convenient dumping ground for people's knowledge about the world, their own culture, etc.' (1968: 50), and he assigns Mitchell's study of the language of buying and selling 'to the realm of ethnography and not of semantics' (*ibid.*: 65). But this is verbal play. It is just such areas of experience and knowledge, call them what you will, that are somehow involved in the individual's acquisition and retention of his knowledge of his vocabulary. The linguist must somehow try to explicate this.

In a recent unpublished but circulated 'working paper', Langendoen has declared himself more sympathetic towards Firthian and Malinowskian semantic notions; but he still fails to come to grips with the question of what shall and shall not properly be held to fall within that term 'meaning' in an adequate explanation of our lexical knowledge of our native language.

It may be felt that the last part of this paper has concentrated rather excessively on context of situation in relation to lexical meanings. But this is the aspect that critics, and especially Langendoen, have focused on; the more general application of the concept to styles and varieties of language use has been more readily accepted and has, in consequence, been subjected to less criticism.

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In summary, I would say that the theory of context of situation, as developed successively by Malinowski and by Firth, made linguists aware of the need for a careful study of the relationships involved in meaning (hitherto this topic had been rather left to the philosophers). Very probably both these scholars thought that the application of the contextual theory was simpler and more straightforward than is in fact the case. But however undeveloped its application may still be, this theory of linguistic semantics does attempt to come to grips with the very basis of meaning relations, which others have been content to take for granted. For this reason I would conclude that, at least until it is replaced by something more effective in this area, Malinowski's and Firth's context of situation theory has something of indispensable value for both linguists and ethnographers.

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## Sociolinguistics and the Ethnography of Speaking<sup>1</sup>

‘Sociolinguistics’ is the most recent and most common term for an area of research that links linguistics with anthropology and sociology. ‘Ethnography of speaking’ designates a particular approach. I shall sketch the context in which the two terms have emerged, then try to indicate the importance of the ethnography of speaking, not only to the area of research, but also to linguistics and anthropology as disciplines.

To argue the study of speech is likely to seem only a plea for linguistics. To avoid that impression, I shall treat linguistics first, and at greater length, arguing the need for ethnography there, before broaching the complementary need for linguistics in social anthropology. Behind both arguments stands a common conception of the study of speech.

### I

Mixed terms linking linguistics with the social sciences, especially anthropology, are an old story. One can trace the use of ‘ethnographic philology’, ‘philological ethnology’, ‘linguistic anthropology’, and the like from at least the middle of the nineteenth century. Until the second world war such terms were usually phrases – coordinate (‘linguistics and ethnology’), genitive (‘sociology of language’), adjectival (‘sociological linguistics’). Only since the second world war have one-word terms come to prominence. Their form, their relative chronology, and their prevalence, are revealing.

The form of these terms – ethnolinguistics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics – shows that it is linguistics, its concepts, methods, and prestige, that has become central. (Hence ‘ethnolinguistics’, not ‘anthropology of language’, for a field of research; and ‘anthropological linguistics’, not ‘linguistic anthropology’, as the prevalent term, even among anthropologists,

for a sub-discipline.) To be sure, Malinowski had, much earlier, spoken (1920: 69) of urgent need for an 'ethnolinguistic theory' to help to elucidate native meanings and texts, but neither the term nor the theory received sustained attention. 'Ethnolinguistics' first emerged into prominence in the late 1940s, followed shortly by 'psycholinguistics' in the early 1950s, and by 'sociolinguistics' in the early 1960s.<sup>2</sup> The sequence reflects the successive impact of recent linguistics, first on anthropologists, who had helped to nurture it, then on psychologists, and, most recently, on sociologists.

The currency of the term reflects, I think, a growing sense of the importance, not only of linguistics, but also of problems of language, and a hope for a combination of rigour and relevance in their study. Interest in sociolinguistics, indeed, is far from being a matter internal to academic disciplines. There are two main sources of practical interest and support: the language problems of developing nations (cf. Fishman, Ferguson, and Das Gupta, 1968), and problems of education and social relations in highly urbanized societies such as England and the United States. With respect to both one is pretty much in the position of wanting to apply a basic science that does not yet exist.<sup>3</sup> The creation of this basic science (whatever its ultimate label and affiliations) I take to be the defining task of sociolinguistics, and the chief warrant for the term.<sup>4</sup>

A more general sort of social relevance is that of seeking to transcend a long-standing 'alienation' of language, and knowledge about language. On this view, language and linguistics often stand to human life in a relation parallel to that of goods and economics, as analysed in the first book of *Das Kapital*. Marx's comments on 'fetishism of commodities', analysis of a human power and creation made to stand over against man, and understood in categories divorcing it from its roots in social life, could be applied, *mutatis mutandi*, to language. From this standpoint, the historical origin of standard languages and linguistic study as instruments of cultural hegemony (Hellenistic study of Greek, Indian of the Sanskritic Vedas, Chinese of the Confucian classics) is unwittingly reinforced by the contemporary methodological canon of defining linguistic theory as concerned only with an ideal speaker-hearer in a perfectly homogeneous community, free from all limitations of actual

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use. The effect is the same, closing off study of the social realities of language by those most able to analyse their linguistic dimension. From this standpoint, sociolinguistics has a contribution to make to what Wright Mills called the task of sociological imagination, that of enabling men to understand their lives adequately in terms of the true determinants of them; here the perspective provided by ethnographic and comparative studies, although of little engineering pertinence, may be of great intellectual importance. We have yet to gain the cross-cultural perspective on speech that we have on child-rearing, sex, religion. Both in linguistics and in social science, the roles of language in human life usually are assumed or asserted. Research that seeks the actual ranges and kinds of meaning that speaking and languages have, and the conditions that support or frustrate each, has hardly begun.<sup>5</sup>

Whatever one's conception of the relevance of sociolinguistics, two things should be made clear about it and the terms on which it is modelled. First, these terms do not designate three disciplines, but rather problem areas that draw members of different disciplines together. The problems and the participants overlap. Not only may scholars from different disciplines contribute under the same one label, but also one and the same scholar may in different contexts contribute under each of the three. The same topic may appear under all three. (The issues raised by Whorf have been discussed as 'ethnolinguistics', 'psycholinguistics', and 'sociolinguistics' in turn.) In effect, the three terms mediate between particular social sciences and linguistics, and, increasingly, between linguistics and the social sciences as a whole. 'Sociolinguistics', the last to emerge, and the one more suggestive of social science as a whole, benefits from this trend, and tends to displace the others, where their putative content is shared. It remains true that there is more willingness to identify one's work as 'sociolinguistic' than to define oneself as a 'sociolinguist'.

Second, the domain of such terms is subject to shifting definition of the disciplines between which they mediate. For something like a generation (say, from *Coral Gardens* (1935) to Katz and Fodor (1963)), a technical study of a folk taxonomy might readily have been labelled 'ethnolinguistic'. Today, given the renewed legitimacy of semantics among linguists, such a

study can be taken as part of linguistics (cf. the excellent textbook by Lyons, 1968). Given the renewed attention to cognitive structures among anthropologists, such a study can equally well be taken as part of social anthropology. A similar fate may await 'sociolinguistics'. Having arisen to fill a gap, it may find itself absorbed from both sides. A generation from now, one still may speak only of linguistics and anthropology (and of sociology and psychology) when disciplines are in question. 'Sociolinguistic', 'ethnolinguistic', and 'psycholinguistic' will remain useful adjectives for kinds of research but their corresponding plural nouns will be seen as having marked a transition.<sup>6</sup>

If this should happen, it will be in the context of a linguistics and a social anthropology in some respects radically recast, such that adjacent sectors merge.<sup>7</sup> I shall return to this prospect in the conclusion. Let me emphasize what I mean by saying here that the prediction would not be verified by increased cooperation between linguists and anthropologists, in the field and after, although there is of course much need for that. It would not be made true by some ethnographers coming to do what some linguists now do, and conversely, although that is essential; or by investigations that are jointly linguistic and ethnographic on just those occasions when the special importance of a feature (linguistic or social) dictates intensive study, although of course one wants such work. These things are needed, most obviously with regard to semantics.<sup>8</sup> No amount of combination of disciplines as presently constituted, however, asking just the questions each now normally asks, will serve. The essence of the prediction is in the hope for disciplines radically recast. It will become true only if linguistics and social anthropology revise their conventional scope and methodology, so that matters now let fall between them are seen as indispensable to each.

The multiplicity of terms, over the past century and more, for the common interests of linguists and anthropologists suggests a recurrent need, and a recurrent tension – a need met often by *ad hoc* coinage, a tension persisting owing to failure to resolve the relationship of the two fields in a form capable of sustained growth. Just as practical problems require an as yet inchoate scientific field, so do some of the tasks of linguists

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and anthropologists. Such a resolution requires changes in present ways of thinking about and working with language in the two disciplines. By 'ethnography of speaking' is meant work to bring about the change.

II

The issues are implicit in the term 'ethnography of speaking' itself. 'Ethnography' has sometimes been considered 'mere' description, not itself a theoretical task, but only fodder for one. Often it has been taken as a part of the scientific division of labour concerned with societies other than one's own. 'Speaking' has been regarded as merely implementation and variation, outside the domain of language and linguistics proper. Linguistic theory has mostly developed in abstraction from contexts of use and sources of diversity. But by an ethnography of speaking I shall understand a description that is a theory – a theory of speech as a system of cultural behaviour; a system not necessarily exotic, but necessarily concerned with the organization of diversity.

Let me now sketch what is entailed with regard to linguistics, considering first the scope and goals of linguistic theory, then issues of methodology.

THE SCOPE OF LINGUISTIC DESCRIPTION

As a term for the activity of linguists that corresponds to ethnography, I shall use simply 'linguistic description'. What portion of language linguists describe, or attend to most carefully, depends of course upon their theoretical outlook. The development of linguistic description in this century must be seen in relation to the introduction of, and changes of foci for, the notion of structure. The concern first was to secure recognition of the synchronic state of a language as a legitimate object of scientific study, as one indeed of theoretical importance and of precedence, independently of practical, historical, cultural, or other considerations. This goal is the culminating theme of Saussure's *Cours de linguistique générale* (1916), the posthumous book regarded as the starting-point of modern linguistics; it is assumed by Boas (1911) (except that cultural



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considerations are important), and it is the theme of Sapir's first theoretical essay (1912), developing into the leitmotiv of his book *Language* (1921).

To a great extent it was the conquest of speech sounds as an area of pattern belonging to linguistics that gave structural linguistics its impetus. (Sound had been the domain of phonetics as a *Naturwissenschaft*, only grammar the domain of linguistics, a *Geisteswissenschaft*.) The area of concentration, where battles of method and theory were first fought, thus was phonology. Boas, Sapir, and Kroeber had already criticized traditional conceptions of word structure; Bloomfield (1933) generalized the notion of morpheme, and morphology came to be intensively cultivated in the late 1930s and the 1940s. Syntax came more to attention in the 1950s, and Chomsky (1957), building on work of Harris, made it *the* centre in a way that radically challenged earlier work in phonology and morphology as well. Semantics has become a major concern in the 1960s, and in some hands in a way that would radically recast previous work in syntax (including that of Chomsky). Very recently the notion of sociolinguistic description has been advanced (Hymes, 1967b) (essentially as a synonym for 'ethnography of speaking'). Here in one sense is the theme of this paper – that the next change of focus for linguistic descriptions entails social description (ethnography), and that with this change the process that began with phonology and morphology will have come full circle – linguistic description will find its own development to require (on a new plane) considerations from which at first it sought to be free.<sup>9</sup>

*Structure and freedom*

A principal issue is the relation seen between structure and freedom, or, from another point of view, between structure and human nature. To put it in grossly simplified form: in seeking structure, Saussure is concerned with the word, Chomsky with the sentence, the ethnography of speaking with the act of speech. That is, for Saussure, the object of linguistic theory was language as a structured social fact, and its sphere was the word. Combinations of words in sentences (conventional phrases apart) were aspects of speech, a matter of individual free creation

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in particular acts outside the sphere of structure. Later linguists extended structural analysis to the sentence, but structure was conceived as segmentation and classification of occurrent forms. With Chomsky, both (a) the scope of syntactic structure and (b) its relation to human nature were reformulated.

As to (a): beyond occurrent forms and distributional patterns was a network of relationships, distinct from, yet basic to, them. In part, Chomsky revitalized traditional conceptions, making them explicit in a formal theory. In so doing Chomsky was carrying further a logic in the recognition of linguistic levels that can be traced from Sapir's 'Sound Patterns in Language' (1925). Briefly, the logic is this: a level (or component) of linguistic structure is to be recognized when there appear systematically two one-many relations. Thus a sentence such as 'Visiting anthropologists can be amusing' may be ambiguous. A single structure, so far as occurrent forms and relations are concerned, it may yet express two different sets of underlying relationships. In one 'anthropologist' is subject, in one object, of the verb from which the gerund 'visiting' derives. (Loosely, it is as if the sentence derived in the one case from 'Someone visits anthropologists', and 'It is amusing'.) This is the relationship Sydney Lamb calls 'neutralization'. Conversely, the same set of relationships may underlie a number of different sentences, e.g. 'Visiting anthropologists can be amusing', 'To visit anthropologists can be amusing', 'It is amusing to visit anthropologists'; or 'It is amusing to be visited by anthropologists', 'Anthropologists who visit can be amusing', etc. This is the relationship Lamb calls 'diversification'. Notice that in the last pair 'anthropologists' is object of a preposition ('by') in one case, subject of 'be' in the other, yet, fundamentally, subject of 'visit' in both. The level of underlying relationships in syntax is 'deep structure'. It is actually more abstract, more remote from the manifest forms (surface structure), than these examples show.<sup>10</sup>

As to (b): Chomsky also reinterpreted the relation of structure to individual freedom and human nature. The deeper structures discovered are not opposed to freedom, but its condition. The child is conceived, not as passively learning linguistic patterns, but as actively constructing a theory to make intelligible the scattered and limited sample of speech that comes his way.

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Within a remarkably short period, from remarkably limited data, the child is seen to acquire essential mastery of a finite device capable of producing an infinity of sentences. These conditions of acquisition are argued by Chomsky to necessitate postulation of a quite specific innate basis (*faculté de langage*). Herein lies the 'creative aspect of language', the 'rule-governed creativity', acquired and used largely free of stimulus control, which permits a speaker to respond appropriately to novel situations. For Chomsky, the ultimate purpose of linguistic theory is to characterize this underlying ability.

The goal of the ethnography of speaking can be said to be to complete the discovery of the sphere of 'rule-governed creativity' with respect to language, and to characterize the abilities of persons in this regard (without prejudice to the specific biological basis of the abilities). In extending the scope of linguistic rules beyond sentences to speech acts, and in seeking to relate language meaningfully to situations, this approach, although compatible with Chomsky's goals, does critically recast certain of his concepts. To see how this is so, let me consider two concepts that Chomsky has made central to discussion, then discuss particular lines of linguistic research.

*Competence and performance*

Chomsky's work is a decisive step, not only in extending the scope of linguistic theory, but also in redefining the nature of its object. For 'language' Chomsky substitutes 'competence' defined as a fluent native speaker's knowledge (largely tacit) of grammaticality – of whether or not putative sentences are part of his language, and according to what structural relationships. The goal of linguistic description is thus changed, from an object independent of men, to a human capacity. Both changes (deep structure, human capacity) are felt to be so great as to lead transformational grammarians to reject 'structural linguistics' as a name for their work, and to use it solely to describe other schools as predecessors. From a social standpoint, transformational grammar might equally well be seen as the culmination of the leading theme of structural linguistics. To centre analysis in a deep structure, one grounded in human nature, is

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to fulfil an impulse of structural linguistics to treat language as a sphere of wholly autonomous form. Such a theory perfects and gives the ultimate justification to a study of language at once of human significance and abstracted from actual human beings.

Chomsky's redefinition of linguistic goals appears, then, a half-way house. The term 'competence' promises more than it in fact contains. Restricted to the purely grammatical, it leaves other aspects of speakers' tacit knowledge and ability in confusion, thrown together under a largely unexamined concept of 'performance'. In effect, 'performance' confuses two separate aims. The first is to stress that 'competence' is something underlying behaviour ('mere performance', 'actual performance'). The second is to allow for aspects of linguistic ability which are not grammatical: psychological constraints on memory, choice of alternative rules, stylistic choices and devices in word order, etc. The intended negative connotation of the first sense of 'performance' tends to attach to the second sense; factors of performance – and all social factors must be placed here – are generally seen as things that limit the realization of grammatical possibilities, rather than as constitutive or enabling. In fact, of course, choice among the alternatives that can be generated from a single base structure depends as much upon a tacit knowledge as does grammar, and can be studied as much in terms of underlying rules as can grammar. Such things equally underlie actual behaviour, and would be aspects of 'competence' in the normal sense of the term. On its own terms, transformational theory must extend the notion of 'competence' to include more than the grammatical.

The need of some such revision is being recognized within transformational theory.<sup>11</sup> What may not be accepted at present is a need to complement the particular thrust, and to revise the particular idealization, of transformational theory. Chomsky's interest is in moving from what is said to what is constant in grammar, and from what is social to what is innate in human nature. That, so to speak, is but half a dialectic. A thoroughgoing linguistics must move in the other direction as well, from what is potential in human nature, and in a grammar, to what is realizable and realized; and conceive of the social factors entering into realization as constitutive and

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rule-governed too. The present tendency is to ignore any content specific to factors external to grammar; as input to the acquisition of its use, they are depreciated, and as aspects of output, actual use, seen as no problem, or, if a problem, only as negative.

An ethnography of speaking approach shares Chomsky's concern for creativity and freedom, but it recognizes that a child, or person, master only of grammar, is not yet free. Chomsky's attempt to discuss the 'creative' aspect of language use (Chomsky, 1966) suffers from the same difficulty as his treatment of 'competence'. The main thrust is independence of situation. Chomsky specifies freedom from stimulus control, infinity of possible sentences, yet appropriateness of novel sentences to novel situations; but the first two properties, and the grammatical mechanisms he considers, can never account for appropriateness. A novel sentence might be wildly inappropriate. Appropriateness involves a *positive* relation to situations, not a negative one, and, indeed, a knowledge of a kind of competence regarding situations and relations of sentences to them. As with 'competence', so with 'creativity': I share Chomsky's goals for linguistics, and admire him for setting them, but they cannot be reached on his terms or by linguistics alone. Rules of appropriateness beyond grammar govern speech, and are acquired as part of conceptions of self, and of meanings associated both with particular forms of speech and with the act of speaking itself.

The issue is especially clear with regard to education and schooling. Chomsky's insistence on the universal capacity for linguistic fluency is essential against the pervasive tendency to blame the failures of a social system on its victims, but in itself provides only a partial remedy.

To say that children could be fluent and are not is poignant, perhaps to invite drastic intervention techniques (some American 'authorities' advise taking black children from their mothers at the age of six months). What is needed as well is a realization that the standard of the schools is not the only standard, that more than one system of speaking, each with rules, values, and satisfactions and accomplishments of its own, is involved. Lower-class black children in the United States, for example, are probably much more sensitive to the aesthetic

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and interactional uses of language than are many middle-class white children.

In such respects the transformational conception of linguistic theory, concerned exclusively with an ideally fluent speaker-listener in a perfectly homogeneous community, may unwittingly play into the hands of those whose views the theory's exponents would wish to reject. Not only are motivations and rules and values for use neglected, but also the 'competence' of which they speak is unlocated, merely glossed with a conventional language name, e.g. English. The theoretical potential of the formal system is imputed to individual speakers. (One leading researcher in children's language, recognizing that Chomsky's 'competence' means the formal system, and not wishing to challenge his theory, went so far as to call the actual knowledge of grammar held by an individual a sub-type of performance!) The difficulty is analogous to the circularity with which Whorf moved between an imputed world-view and the linguistic data (from one informant in New York City) from which the world-view had been inferred. In fact, of course, similar bodies of data are compatible with different underlying organization and degrees of knowledge in individual speakers. (One serious difficulty for some children is that their speech is referred by teachers to the same grammatical system as standard English, when, in the case of West Indian and many American negro children, it may have a distinct history involving past creolization; consequently, a grammar superficially similar may be in important respects distinct (cf. Dillard, 1968).)

An adequate approach must distinguish and investigate four aspects of competence: (a) *systematic potential* – whether and to what extent something is not yet realized, and, in a sense, not yet known; it is to this that Chomsky in effect reduces competence; (b) *appropriateness* – whether and to what extent something is in some context suitable, effective, or the like; (c) *occurrence* – whether and to what extent something is done; (d) *feasibility* – whether and to what extent something is possible, given the means of implementation available.

The last three dimensions would have to be 'performance' in the system of Chomsky's *Aspects* (1965), but knowledge with regard to each is part of the competence of a speaker-hearer in any full sense of the term, and 'performance' should be

reserved for a more normal, consistent meaning (see below). There is no notice of occurrence in *Aspects*, or in most current linguistic theory, but it is an essential dimension. Most linguists today scorn quantitative data, for example, but Labov (1966, 1969) has shown that systematic study of quantitative variation discloses new kinds of structure and makes possible explanation of change. In general, this theoretical dimension provides for the fact that members of a speech community are aware of the commonness, rarity, previous occurrence or novelty, of many features of speech, and that this knowledge enters into their definitions and evaluations of ways of speaking.<sup>12</sup>

In terms of these dimensions, one can say of speech that it is, for example, grammatical, awkward, overly formal, and rare (as in the conversation of the American ambassador to the Court of St James in the TV film, 'The Royal Family'); ungrammatical, difficult, expressively appropriate, and individual (as in the speech of Leontes in Act II of *The Winter's Tale* (Thorne, 1969)); ungrammatical, awkward, appropriate, and common (as in the bumbling speech required of Burundi peasants before aristocrats (Albert, 1972)); grammatical, easy, correct, and avoided (as indicated in these remarks under 'Dukes and Duchesses . . . Style of Addressing in Speech': '. . . though the necessity for using the full title would generally be avoided . . . in conversation it is best to make as sparing a use as possible of titles' (*Titles and Forms of Address*, 1967: 46)).

One must recognize not only knowledge, but also ability to implement it, with respect to each of these dimensions, as a component of competence in speaking. Especially, one must provide for motivation and value.<sup>13</sup> And, as indicated, the competence to be attributed to particular persons and communities is in each case an empirical matter. Transformational theory recognizes that what seems the same sentence may enter into two quite different sets of relations, syntactically; it must recognize the same thing to be true, socially.

Finally, the negative connotation of *performance*, as the realization of knowledge and ability, must be replaced with recognition of its positive aspect as well. There are properties of performance, essential to the social role of speaking, that go beyond the knowledge and ability referable to particular persons. In part these properties are functions of the social organ-

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ization of speech (complementarity of roles, etc.), in part they emerge in the actual events of speech themselves (as when one speaks to a responsive or a 'cold' audience).<sup>14</sup>

Such a perspective calls for a descriptive method, a methodological approach, different from that common in linguistics. To indicate what it would be like let me consider the ways in which linguistics itself is moving in the required direction.

#### DIRECTIONS OF LINGUISTIC DESCRIPTION

In the immediate situation in linguistics the main frontiers of relevant work have to do with the extension of analysis beyond the sentence to sequences in discourse; beyond the single language to *choices* among forms of speech; and beyond the referential function to functions that may be loosely grouped together as stylistic. Each of these can be seen as involving kinds of knowledge and ability (i.e. competence) on the part of members of a community.

#### *Discourse: texts*

Chomsky has recently alluded to coherence (1968: 11), perhaps in response to the attention given to it by Halliday, Gleason, and others (coherence was not discussed in Chomsky, 1965, despite the attribution of it here to a Cartesian view). Just as one has the ability to recognize a sentence as grammatical or ungrammatical, so one has the ability to recognize a series of sentences as discourse, rather than an arbitrary list (Hasan, 1968: 1). The ability depends in important part on properly linguistic features and is increasingly recognized as a necessary facet of investigation (cf. Daneš, 1964; Halliday, 1967). Three brief examples must suffice.

Kiparsky (1968), for example, in a brilliant article explaining diverse Indo-European phenomena in terms of a single type of rule, conjunct reduction (by virtue of which the second occurrence of a feature may be omitted or expressed by an unmarked form), notes that the scope of such rules applies across sentences (p. 34n.4) and even across change of speakers in dialogue (p. 43). Gunter (1966) explicitly attacks the restriction of *la langue* to the sentence, and notes that the placement of accent cannot be



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explained without the assumption that a given variety of a sentence signals its own particular kind of relevance to its context. (By variety of sentence is meant that a given sentence is in effect chosen from among what another linguist, Henry Hiz, has called a battery. There are paradigms not only of morphemes, but of sentences as well.) The format of the usual transformational grammar is criticized for obscuring the relation among the members of a paradigm of sentence varieties. With particular reference to accent, Gunter goes on to show that some placements in dialogue make nonsense of it, others provide intelligibility; that in general one has a knowledge of 'context grammar' that enables one to tell whether a sentence is relevant to what has just been said, or whether relevance to an implicit (non-verbal) context must be sought; if the former, what the connection is, and if the latter, what limits the form and content of the non-overt must satisfy. (See Gunter's article for detailed interpretation of English examples.) As a third example, let me cite Wheeler (1967), who found that his Siona informants would allow variation in the enclitic chosen to mark subject and object relations, where single sentences were involved, but would stubbornly refuse to vary the presence or choice of enclitic in texts. There was decidedly a fixed order for use or non-use of the markers, if a narration or dialogue was to be acceptable, yet no clue within the sentence as to the rationale. Wheeler discovered (partly with the aid of kinesic behaviour on the part of informants) that not one but two dimensions underlay the grammatical markers in question. The markers signalled both subject, object, or goal within the sentence, and degree of focus – emphatic, normal, or none – within the discourse. This last, purely discourse, function is indeed their primary function.

The study of texts is of course familiar to linguists and ethnographers both; and transformational grammar itself began in work of Zellig Harris in the early 1950s on certain recurrent properties of texts. The work cited above makes clear the development of text analysis in terms of an extended understanding of the competence of speakers. There is much to be learnt just from such study of syntactic relations. At the same time, analysis must go beyond purely linguistic markers. Much of the coherence of texts depends upon abstract rules independent of specific linguistic form, indeed, of speech. Such are

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the kinds of knowledge that the sociologist Harvey Sacks analyses as hearers' and viewers' maxims. One such maxim in brief form is: if the first of two sentences can be heard (interpreted) as the cause of the second, hear it that way. Sacks (1972) uses the start of a children's story as illustration: 'The baby cried. The mommy picked it up.' He notes that we spontaneously take the mommy to be *its* mommy, and to have picked the baby up *because* it cried, although neither relationship is stated (or implied by the underlying syntax).<sup>15</sup>

A familiar example of structural analysis of texts is of course the work of Lévi-Strauss, Greimas, and others. From the standpoint of an ethnography of speaking, such work has a complementary limitation: it has little or nothing to do with specific linguistic form at all. This is not to deny the existence of narrative structures independent of linguistic form, but to question that their function can be validly inferred apart from a knowledge of such form. In a Chinookan myth, for example, any translation, even an abstract, would make clear the presence of a structure, 'Interdiction: Interdiction violated', and imply that the outcome (a murder) follows from the violation, as so often is found to be the case. Analysis of the myth in terms of its specific development, in Clackamas Chinook, discloses structures that place almost an opposite significance on the myth. The myth is to be understood in terms of a specifically Chinookan theory of myth (one requiring constant moving back and forth between linguistic form and cultural meaning for its discovery, as in the classic structural linguistic principle of form-meaning covariation) such that it is here not the violator, but the one who issues the interdiction, who, in Clackamas terms, is culpable. Only through control of the original linguistic form, moreover, is one able to discover that an inherited plot has been shaped to express through imagery and style a personal meaning, as well as to see that the terse myth has a unity (see Hymes, 1968b).

The particular contribution of linguistics presumably will be to explore to its limits the formally linguistic coherence of texts, and, as in the work of Gunter, Labov, and some others, to explore conversational interaction as well. The contribution of social anthropology may be to explore the structure of conversational interaction more directly and thoroughly, as part of

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ethnography, and to insist on understanding discourse structures as *situated*, that is, as pertaining to cultural and personal occasions in which part of their meaning and structure lies.<sup>16</sup> There is as yet relatively little work that integrates both aspects. These points bring us to a central concept, that of speech act.

*Discourse: speech acts*

To consider discourse as situated is not to refer it to an infinity of possible contextual factors. (The failure to develop a method beyond the handling of discrete instances vitiated the influence of Malinowski's work.) Linguists and perhaps others do tend to imagine that when a door is opened on a level beyond the familiar, everything in the universe outside will rush in. From the standpoint of ethnography of speaking, there is in a community a system of speech acts, a structured knowledge of kinds and occasions of speech. The level of speech acts is indeed implied by the very logic that has led, since Sapir's 'Sound Patterns in Language' (1925), to the recognition of other implicit levels in linguistics. As discussed earlier with regard to syntax, the question is one of a one-many, many-one relationship.

Just so with the status of sentences as acts of speech. A sentence in interrogative form may serve as a question, a reflective statement, a command; a question may be expressed in interrogative or declarative form ('Is this clock slow?': 'I say, this clock seems to be a bit slow'). In general, the function of an interrogative, declarative, or imperative form of sentence is not uniquely given in virtue of that form; the same functions may be served by different forms.

Some linguists, recognizing the significance of speech acts, now wish to incorporate them into syntax, so that a sentence carries with it in deep structure something like 'I ask you', 'I tell you', and the like (normally deleted in overt form). There is indeed evidence to support this approach in some cases (McCawley, 1968: 157), but as a general solution to the problem it appears a last-ditch effort to keep within the conventional boundaries of linguistics. An approach that insists on the complex, abstract knowledge of speakers with regard to other relationships quite distinct from manifest form need not cling to a

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literal verbal embodiment of acts of speech. Some assertions, requests, commands, threats, and the like are known to be such on the basis of a knowledge, *jointly*, of the message-form and the relationship in which it occurs. Commonly the same message-form serves as a serious insult in some relationships and as a badge of intimacy in others. (This point will be taken up with regard to code-switching.) An approach that is limited to occurrences of actual illocutionary verbs (overt or covert) cannot handle the status in some circumstances of 'Oh dear, I seem to be out of matches' as a request.

A related point – obvious, yet needing to be repeatedly mentioned – is that the rules that govern speech acts govern more than single speakers and more than speech. The Sanskrit rule for conjunct reduction across interlocutors has been mentioned. An especially nice example of both points is found among the Haya of northern Tanzania (Sheila Seitel, personal communication). When mentioning a quantity, the speaker will say something such as 'We saw this many of them', holding up a certain number of fingers. It is the listener who then says the number. When rules for summoning in English are developed (Schegloff, 1972), they are found to subsume both verbal and non-verbal acts: 'George!', a telephone ring, a knock on a door. By the same logic that rejects compartments in syntax and phonology when they prevent unitary treatment of unitary phenomena (cf. McCawley, 1968: 166 ff.), the boundary between verbal and non-verbal messages must be erased in a good many cases when sentences are studied as addressed acts of speech.

### *Codes and code-switching*

'Code-switching' is a common term for alternate use of two or more languages, or varieties of a language. Studies of code-switching are among the most important developments in sociolinguistics, first, because bilingualism and bidialectism are significant social matters, and, second, because the work necessarily breaks with the implicit image of 'one language – one community'. Such studies show that the very notions of speech community, fluency of speakers, what counts as a 'language' as an object of description, are dependent on ethnographic and comparative study.

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The linguistic and communicative boundaries between communities cannot be defined by linguistic features alone (cf. Hymes, 1968c). Forms of speech of the same degree of linguistic difference may be counted as dialects in one area, as distinct languages in another, depending on the political, not the linguistic, history of the area in question. This is so in Africa (Jan Voochoeve, personal communication) and lies beneath the appearance of linguistic uniformity in Europe. Were the standard languages removed, Europe would look linguistically much more like native America.

Three separate dimensions seem to have been confused in the usual notion of a 'language': *provenance of content*, *mutual intelligibility*, and *functional role*. Sometimes different forms of speech are called by the same language name because their historical provenance is seen to be substantially the same (e.g. 'English' for a variety of 'dialects' throughout the world). Sometimes two communities are said to have the same, or different, languages on grounds of mutual intelligibility, or the lack thereof. Sometimes a form of speech is said to be the language of a community because it is the primary mode of interaction (the 'vernacular'). Yet each of these criteria leads to different results. Not all forms of speech derived from a common English source (more or less common – the earlier dialect diversity of English must not be overlooked) are mutually intelligible. Some mutually unintelligible forms of speech are not distinct languages: 'pig Latin', for example, derives from English by one or two operations. Groups sometimes have a primary form of speech that conflates material of different provenance, e.g. the French-suffused speech of pre-revolutionary Russian aristocracy, or the mixed Latin-German of Luther's tabletalk. The functional variety, 'language of the demons', among Sinhalese conflates (a) Sanskrit, (b) Pali, (c) Classical Sinhalese, and (d) a polyglot mixture, according to whether (a) Hindu or (b) Buddhist deities are invoked or mentioned, or (c) origin myths are narrated, or (d) demons are directly addressed and commanded (Tambiah, 1968: 177).

An adequate approach might be developed along the following lines. *Speech community* would be defined in terms of the sharing both of some one primary form of speech, and of rules for its use. (Peoples may share a language but have different rules

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for its use, or may share rules of use but apply them to different languages.) *Form of speech* could be adopted as a neutral, basic term.<sup>17</sup> The number and kinds of forms of speech in a community would, of course, be an empirical matter. Where connection among varieties in terms of common provenance of their stock of lexical and grammatical materials is in question, one would speak, as now, of *languages* and *dialects*. Where mutual intelligibility is in question, one would speak of *codes*. This usage would allow for inclusion of such forms of speech as Mazateco whistle-talk, Jabo drum-signalling and horn-calling, Tagalog speech disguise, and the like. There are thus two dimensions to differences of code: some require the learning of new linguistic content, some require the learning of operations on linguistic content already known. Where functional role is in question, one would speak of *varieties* (cf. Ferguson and Gumperz, 1960), and, more specifically for situations, of *registers*.

Just to locate the referent of its description, then, linguistics must place the particular body of judgements of acceptability, kinds of grammatical knowledge, etc., which it wishes to analyse, among the plurality of forms of speech found in every community. For pure linguistics, the task may be only a way of excluding some phenomena and of ensuring the validity of those selected for description. For social anthropology and ethnography of speaking, such an account of the repertoire of a community is an essential framework. An interesting account of a trilingual community in this regard has been provided by Denison (1968).<sup>18</sup> Denison delineates thirteen factors involved in the selection of one or the other of the three languages in Sauris (German, Italian, Friulian). These factors can be seen to be aspects of four general aspects of speaking: Situation (here, formality of the scene, home setting); Genre (here, sayings, written genres – Denison reports that the basic distinction for genre depends on a relationship to what I would term Key – the attitude or spirit in which the act occurs; here, spontaneity versus non-spontaneity); participants (here, capacities and preference of sender, receiver, auditor for a variety, plus age and sex); and the Act-Sequence itself (here, shifts in topic, and the variety of the preceding discourse).

Code-selection and code-switching (more precisely variety-selection and -switching) point beyond themselves in two

important ways. First, their description requires, and helps to create, an adequate general framework for the discovery and statement of rules of speaking. Varieties of form of speech may depend upon a single factor, such as setting in time and place, or culturally defined scene (*Situation*); on characteristics of *participants*; on *ends in view* (e.g. Kaska Indians switch to English to curse); the form and topics of the discourse as it unfolds (*Act-Sequence*); the tone or mood (e.g. mock:serious, warm:reserved, etc.) (*Key*); the *instrumentalities* available in terms of *channels* (oral, written, and perhaps here, use of the voice in singing, etc.); *norms of interaction* holding between or for participants and situations (e.g. whether to select the variety best known to a given interlocutor is obligatory, ingratiating, or insulting (as implying that he does not know some more prestigious variety)); *norms of interpretation* (beliefs and values, and common-sense reasoning, e.g. treating infant vocalization as a separate code, knowledge of which is shared by some men with certain guardian spirits (Wishram Chinook)); and, finally, *Genre*. More commonly, rules for use of a form of speech will involve relations among two or more factors. Just these two steps – identifying what can count as an instance of such a factor relevant to communication, and discovering the relations obtaining between such factors – are the fundamental steps of ethnography of speaking (and communication) generally.

Second, the dimensions and meanings found to underlie and explain the selection and switching of varieties are general. Intimacy versus distance, for example, is a dimension underlying choice of Spanish or of Guarani in Paraguay (Rubin, 1968); it is also a dimension underlying choice of pronouns *ty* or *vy* in Russian. If pursued in a thoroughgoing way, the problem of forms of speech brings one to the starting-point of ethnography of speaking as a whole. Very simply and very generally, that starting-point is to recognize that in any community a number of *ways of speaking* will be distinguished. Shifts in the entire provenance of the linguistic material (e.g. German to Italian) are perhaps the most salient evidence, but shifts in any other aspect of speaking provide evidence as well: from normal voice to whispering; from direct to indirect address; from rapid to deliberate tempo; from one topic to another; from one selection of grammatical and/or lexical and/or phonological

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features within a variety to another; and so on. Here is the kind of form–meaning covariation that is basic to ethnography of speaking and sociolinguistics, the sociolinguistic commutation test, as it were, analogous to the principle of structural contrast basic to the relevance of features in linguistics proper. In some cases it is clear how to extend the form of a grammar to comprise ways of speaking, as when it is a question of automatically selected features, when one participant is of a certain status (cf. Sherzer, 1967), or there is a discretely defined genre (DeCamp, 1968). For many aspects of ways of speaking, adequate modes of statement remain to be worked out.

Many ways of speaking, of course, require intimate command of a community's linguistic resources for their study. Choice of language varieties has the advantage for social anthropologists of being both salient and representative. It must be clear that study of varieties, and of ways of speaking, is more than a matter of merely correlating linguistic forms with situations, however; this raises the question of functional perspective.

#### FUNCTIONS OF SPEECH

What must be stressed here is the priority of a functional perspective, and the plurality and problematic status of functions. Discovery of structure in linguistics has proceeded mostly as if the function of language is reference alone. The common account of language as mediating merely between (vocal) sound and meaning manifests this assumption. It pictures language as structure between the two continua of possible meanings and possible sounds. The image of man implied is of an abstract, isolated individual, related only to a world of objects to be named and described. Ethnography of speaking proceeds on the hypothesis that an equally primary function of speech is *address*. Speech, including linguistic structure as a major, but not a sole, resource, mediates between persons and their situations. Ordinary linguistic structure, a constituent of the organization of speaking, cannot suffice as a starting-point from which to discover that organization. One must begin from speaking as a mode of action, not from language as an unmotivated mechanism.

This perspective has direct consequences for the handling of



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phenomena commonly grouped loosely together as 'style' (on 'style' as a residual category, cf. Gunter, 1966). There is a tendency to regard style as deviation from a norm set by ordinary linguistic analysis, rather than as the accomplishment of communicative purposes through more complex means; and to deal with such matters only when they intrude inescapably into ordinary linguistic analysis. Chomsky has noted the existence of rules of style with regard to word order and the case-form of pronouns in surface structure, for example, but essentially to make clear that they do not bear on the theory of grammatical structure which is his proper concern (1965: 125, 227–228n.5; 221–222n.36). There has indeed been some valuable work on these matters in various schools of linguistics in Europe, and in various centres in England and the United States. (Two selections of important work are Chatman and Levin (1966) and Steinmann (1967).) The focus of most work called stylistic is on literary or other texts. Stylistics is invaluable to the ethnography of speaking, and indeed almost indistinguishable from it (cf. Guiraud, 1961, 'Conclusion'), but the ethnographic approach must be concerned with ways of speaking generally.

From such a perspective, phenomena of style do not merely supervene, but they reconstitute elements of linguistic theory in the narrower sense. Let me give brief examples, from phonology, grammar, and from ways of speaking.

From an ordinary linguistic standpoint, aspiration and word order are relevant when subject to phonemic contrast and transformational rules, respectively, and are otherwise peripheral or irrelevant. From a more general functional perspective, these and a number of other features are empirical universals of languages, differing among languages not in the fact but in the kind of relevance. Every language has conventional elements that are 'stylistic' as well as 'referential' in function, and the two are interdependent; what is stylistic in a given context cannot at the same time be referential. If aspiration distinguishes words as lexical items, it cannot at the same time distinguish an expressive from a neutral use of a word, and conversely. In a linguistic description on ethnographic principles, then, one begins by asking not what elements are phonemic, transformationally governed, etc., but simply what elements are conventionally recognized means of verbal expression. It is a